

621 common meal was formerly a great bond of village unity. Mutual
 476 help within the village and the family group is practised on many occasions. There are a number of folk-tales designed to show the evil consequences of refusing to lend, whether beer-pots or more valued assistance. Many proverbs enjoin the necessity of prompt and effectual mutual helpfulness and co-operation, as e.g.

U o popela ukuawo ongandu ka lula.

[539] (He who saves another (from) a crocodile does not undress.)

476 The mechanism of co-operation, the round of daily life in village and field, together with the cycles of food and of work, are properly subjects of further study. Here the purpose is to show the definitely family nature of the village and of its life. To the [181] casual observer the Ovimbundu appear as severe individualists. Indeed, they are individualistic to a degree, but they have worked out mechanisms of mutual helpfulness and co-operation which functioned both on political lines under the aegis of the king and within the kinship units.

Social Life of the Village

517 The two foci of the village life are the Men's Club and the
 • 521 Dancing Floor. Even though no *onjango* may have been built, the
 562 Men's Club will find a place in which to carry on, at least when there may be fine weather. Leisure may be limited, but time for conversation will be found. Europeans often express wonder at the amount of conversation which goes on between Africans, for they cannot understand what people of apparently such limited opportunities and with what seems like so narrow an outlook may have to discuss at such great length. As for the Ovimbundu, there is nothing which is a greater hardship than lack of opportunity for conversation with their fellows. Under primitive conditions this is more especially true of the men, who, in their villages, are always surrounded by members of their own family group. Owing to their peculiar position in the village and their household pre-occupations, the women's social propensities may find less outlet in these public gatherings. When the villagers gather on the dancing floor and the gourds of beer go round, they always separate according to sex. Whether the occasion be formal or informal, I have seen the discussion carried to great lengths, with the pipe passed between the men, while the women sat silently by,

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- 517 some pulling on their stubby little pipes and watching the men.
 521 As the men smoke, they may pass the pipe from mouth to mouth,
 562 but not so the women.
- 577 Tobacco (*akaya*) is a great vehicle for sociability whether in
 276 the pipe or in the form of snuff. 'Snuffing is held to clear the head,
 to clarify the thought, to enlighten the eyes, to sharpen the hearing,
 and comfort the heart.'¹ 'Taking a pinch of snuff, between the
 forefinger and the thumb, is unknown . . . and would be con-
 sidered . . . very unsatisfactory. . . . They pour about a teaspoonful
 into the palm of the hand, and burying their . . . nostrils in the
 peppery mixture snort it up loudly, aided by a rotary motion of the
 half-closed hand.'²
- 273 Beer (*ocimbombo*) is of even greater importance. Its place has
 long been threatened by such drinks as the stronger beer made
 from emmer wheat (*ekundi*), mead (*ingundu* and *ocasa*), and
 [177] imported rum. Within the past thirty or forty years the Ovi-
 mbundu have themselves learned to distil rum (*okacipembe*) from
 sweet potatoes, sugar-cane, pumpkins, &c., and although the
 industry is illegal, it has grown to great proportions and nothing
 now seems able to stop it. It is the widespread use of this strong
 drink, with its concomitant evils, which is to-day the greatest
 enemy of the social life.
- 535 The dance is probably the most important element in the social
 life of the village. The Ovimbundu have many different dances
 and they dance on every occasion and on the slightest provocation.
 I have collected thirty songs to accompany dances. About three-
 fourths of them are sometimes used at funerals or at other cere-
 monial occasions, some of them are for more frivolous purposes,
 and most of those which are used for ceremonies are used at other
 times also. It is not for nothing that an Umbundu equivalent of
 (338) the proverb 'Strike while the iron is hot', runs as follows:

Nda wa mōlā oñoma, pihula:

When you see a drum, dance:

Oñoma ka yi muñdā luwāli.

A drum may not be seen twice.

During one of my visits to Ngendo there was an important funeral with much dancing at Ndumba, just across the valley. At

¹ Tucker, *Drums in the Darkness* (Toronto and New York: Doran, 1927), p. 38.

² Monteiro, *Angola and the River Congo*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1875), vol. ii, p. 271.

226 spear eight feet long, the end of which consisted of ten sharp prongs
462 of palm stem (Plate LXXIII, Fig. 1).

[171] Near Cangamba in eastern Angola, fishing in the Kwando River occupied numerous men and women of the mixed tribes in the district, namely, Vachokue, Luchazi, and Babunda. Men paddled into midstream in small bark canoes from which fishing operations were directed. The fishermen carried small conical string nets, which were attached to stakes in such a way that the openings of the nets faced upstream. Vachokue women, working in pairs, dragged baskets against the current (Plate LXXXV, Figs. 1, 2).

AGRICULTURE AND COOKING

343 *Osila* is the Umbundu word for the granary which stands on
243 wooden supports (Plate XLIV, Fig. 1); this *osila* is for the restricted family, and there is one *osila* for every house. The Ovimbundu store their corn in bulk, but in the Esele country I noted that the cobs themselves were carefully packed. Each Ocimbundu girl cultivates a small patch of ground, the produce of which she is at liberty to sell in order to buy brass ornaments, beads, and palm oil.

In addition to maize, barley, oats, and wheat, with here and there a little rye, are occasionally grown. There are three colors of beans, red, white, and black. There is no attempt to keep the varieties separate, so they cross-fertilize freely. The Ovimbundu try to cultivate a surplus of beans and maize which they use to pay their taxes to the Portuguese, likewise to sell at the stores of traders.

252 Corn is pounded on the rock which has been used for generations
512 after it has been consecrated by sprinkling the blood of a chicken. Pounding begins as early as five o'clock in the morning, before sunrise, and from that time to sunset the pounding-rock is in use. The rock is evidently regarded as a meeting place for social intercourse; it is undoubtedly the center of village gossip so far as the women are concerned (Plate XXXVI, Fig. 2).

As corn alone is considered a poor food, it is sprinkled on boiling water to which beans are added. Cooking goes on from early morning to sunset over a slow fire. Children sometimes receive as their evening meal a thick plastic cake of mushed corn to which green leaves of a squash are added.

252 There are five kinds of manioc resembling one another in general appearance, but the Ovimbundu distinguish the plants, and reserve for each what they consider to be appropriate preparation. The method varies for sweet and bitter varieties of manioc.